

REMARKS

In this Response, claims 8, 17, 18, and 20 have been amended, no new claims have been added, and no claims have been cancelled from consideration. Therefore, claims 1-20 are pending and are submitted for consideration.

Claims 8, 17, and 18 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §101 and 35 U.S.C. §112 for overlapping two statutory classes of invention, and for being indefinite. Applicants have amended claims 8, 17, and 18 to be compliant with M.P.E.P § 2173.05p(II). More particularly, claims 8, 17, and 18 have been amended to remove the method steps and to incorporate similar limitations into the claims that further define a hardware element (the controller) of the recited processing tools, in accordance with §2173.05p(II) of the M.P.E.P. Reconsideration and withdrawal of the §101 and §112 rejections are respectfully requested.

Claims 1, 2, 5, 6, 8-10, 13-15, and 17-20 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102 over Garric (US Patent No. 5,382,127). The Office Action took the position that Garric teaches each and every element recited in claims 1, 2, 5, 6, 8-10, 13-15, and 17-20. Applicants traverse the rejection and respectfully submit that each of claims 1, 2, 5, 6, 8-10, 13-15, and 17-20 recite subject matter that is neither taught nor disclosed by Garric.

Independent claims 1, 8, and 17-20 are each directed a method or apparatus for supplying or transmitting substrates to a processing tool, and each of these claims includes the limitation of the carriers being exchanged "while the substrate carrier is in motion." Although Garric teaches exchange locations at which substrate carriers are exchanged with a transport device, the exchange in Garric takes place in a stationary manner. Specifically, at column 22, lines 13-27,

Garric teaches that the carriers 100 are transmitted down path 402 in the direction of arrow 12 and are pushed into a by-pass station 402A, where a lever stops the carrier so that the factory exchange 302 can pick the carrier up off of the chute 402A. See, Figure 1A. Thus, the carrier 100 of Garric is clearly not "in motion" during the exchange, as expressly recited in each of Applicants' independent claims 1, 8, and 17-20. As such, Applicants submit that Garric fails to teach or disclose each and every element recited in Applicants' independent claims 1, 8, and 17-20. Therefore, reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection of independent claims 1, 8, and 17-20, along with dependent claims 2, 5, 6, 8-10, and 13-15, is respectfully requested.

Claim 3 stands rejection under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over Garric in view of Matsumoto (US Patent No. 6,517,304); Claims 4, 11, and 12 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Garric and Matsumoto, further in view of Asakawa (JP 10256346); and Claims 7 and 16 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Garric in view of Kimura (US Patent No. 6,439,822).

Each of rejected claims 3, 4, 7, 11, 12, and 16 depend from either claim 1 or claim 8, both of which include the limitation that the substrate carrier is exchanged "while the substrate carrier is in motion." As such, each of rejected claims 3, 4, 7, 11, 12, and 16 also include this limitation as a result of being dependent upon a base claim having the limitation recited therein.


After review and consideration of Matsumoto, Asakawa, and Kimura, Applicants submit that none of these references appear to teach, show, or suggest a substrate carrier being exchanged while the substrate carrier is in motion. As such, Applicants submit that none of these references furthers the teaching of

the primary reference (Garric) to the level necessary to properly support an obviousness rejection of claims 3, 4, 7, 11, 12, or 16. Specifically, Applicants submit that none of the cited references, when taken either alone or in combination, teaches, shows, or suggests a substrate carrier being exchanged with a transport device while the substrate carrier is in motion. Therefore, reconsideration and withdrawal of the \$103 rejections of claims 3, 4, 7, 11, 12, and 16 is respectfully requested.

In conclusion, Applicants submit that none of the references cited in the Office Action, when taken either alone or in combination, teach, show, or suggest exchanging a substrate carrier with a transport device or conveyor while the substrate carrier is in motion, which is a limitation included in each of Applicants independent claims. As such, Applicants submit that claims 1-20 are allowable over the cited prior art and the Examiner's allowance of claims 1-20 is respectfully requested.

Applicants believe the claims are now in condition for allowance, and respectfully request reconsideration and allowance of the same. Applicants do not believe any fees are due regarding this Amendment. However, if any fees are required, please charge Deposit Account No. 04-1696.

Respectfully Submitted,


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Dated: March 15, 2006
Tarrytown, New York